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# A Wedding of Function & Fantasy

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*Davenport's Restaurant, the Italian Gardens, in the early 1900s. The elegance of the architecture was always complemented by a profusion of fresh flowers. The restaurant was destroyed in the 1950s.*

## The Creation of Louis Davenport's Restaurant and Hotel

IN THE 1870S THE NAME SPOKANE EVOKED IMAGES OF THE FRONTIER: *Indians camping at their fishing grounds by an awesome cataract, and bold pioneers building rude cabins nearby. Within two decades the city was known for the opulent lifestyle of its principal citizens, whose wealth was derived from neighboring mines. By the turn of the century Spokane was famous for Davenport's restaurant, an establishment where gastronomic delights were dispensed with impeccable service in elegant and intriguing surroundings. When the Davenport Hotel opened next*

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*Davenport's Restaurant (center) and the Pennington Hotel (left) were both refaced soon after 1900 in an exuberant version of the mission style. The Dutch gables to the right stand on the site of the future Davenport Hotel.*

door in 1914, it was immediately recognized as one of the world's foremost hotels. Its proprietor, Louis Davenport, capitalizing on the success of his restaurant, created a place of outstanding comfort and hospitality.

The schemes of financiers and entrepreneurs had made Spokane into a progressive city; but it was artists who gave lasting form to the plans of businessmen. Two such artists, Louis Davenport and his architect Kirtland Cutter, expressed the aspirations of their day. In creating the Davenport Hotel they endowed Spokane with a legacy that outlived the fortunes of the gilded age.

However, of late the survival of the Davenport has been in doubt, and recently it has hung by a thread. Victim of the ubiquitous motel, it was insensitively modernized in the 1950s, wracked by financial scandal in the 1960s, and forced to close in 1985. For five years the "Grand Old Lady" of Spokane lay empty, maintained only by a skeleton staff. Then Sun Hotels International of Hong Kong purchased the hotel and began rehabilitation. The new owners intend to respect its historic character and restore it, as far as is practicable, to its original design. A deciding factor in the sale was the attachment of the people of Spokane to their celebrated hotel. When local funding for a parking structure across the street was not forthcoming, the company halted restoration. Now the city and adjoining property owners are working on a parking proposal. Once more there is hope.

Louis Davenport arrived almost penniless in Spokane in March 1889. On August 18 of that year the downtown area was almost entirely destroyed by fire. When the ashes cooled Davenport was among those who cleared the rubble and debris from the burnt buildings. Soon he had saved enough money to buy a tent, a waffle iron, and a large sign announcing "Davenport's Famous Waffle Foundry." On December 8 he opened for business on the corner of Post and Sprague and for a few months plied a lucrative trade in waffles. But in July 1890 he moved into the Wilson Block, a new brick building whose construction he had watched from his makeshift quarters. Here, in a solid structure with more space available, he expanded his menu and provided a comfortable dining room. In this new venture he exploited his genius for service and his ability to satisfy his customers' desires. He operated at a minimal profit to attract patrons. Once they had experienced his hospitality they tended to return regularly. Soon the restaurant became a favorite dining place

for travelers and its reputation spread to other cities.

Over the next 15 years Davenport plowed his profits back into the business, constantly improving his facilities and expanding into adjacent spaces. In 1895 it was reported that the yearly outlay on improvements and repairs was "enough to keep half a dozen restaurants looking new." Davenport's partner in the transformation of the restaurant into a showpiece was architect Kirtland Cutter.

Cutter (1860-1939) grew up in Ohio in a well-to-do family. At the home of his great grandfather, Jared Kirtland, a distinguished physician and naturalist, young Cutter acquired a sense of wonder; he also learned to feel at home with the leaders of society. After studying art in New York and Europe, he traveled to Spokane in 1886.

Cutter was determined to become an architect, despite his lack of professional education in the field. His grounding in architecture was through observation during his travels and the study of the latest work published in journals. As money from nearby mining enterprises poured into the city there was opportunity to match his enthusiasm. Talent, charm and personal connections helped him to gain commissions. By 1889 he was constructing mansions for two of Spokane's principal citizens. But it was the destruction of downtown Spokane by fire in August of that year that truly launched his career. As Louis Davenport was clearing the rubble from burnt-out lots, Kirtland Cutter was projecting new buildings for them.

Over the next three decades, most of them spent in partnership with the practical-minded Karl G. Malmgren, Cutter designed a wide variety of styles, from the rustic and picturesque to the formal and classical. His houses were inspired by types as diverse as rambling English cottages, stately southern mansions, and the palaces of oriental potentates. Merely providing for his clients' needs was not enough for him; he used his imagination to offer them delight. He knew very well how wealthy people lived, but wanted to create new heights of pleasure for them in their homes and places of entertainment.

Louis Davenport had a similar approach to his business. It was not enough to serve his customers with excellent food; he felt it his duty to transport them from the humdrum environment of everyday life into a dream world. His collaboration with Cutter, which lasted over 30 years, was fruitful to both men. We do not know which ideas came from the restauranteur and which from the architect—perhaps they hardly knew themselves. They sparked off each other and jointly produced the establishment that evolved from a small restaurant to a great hotel.

When Davenport first opened his restaurant in the Wilson block during the summer of 1890, he had a relatively small room in the center of the block. The next year he added a second room to the west, and in 1893 he expanded into a third on the east side. He now had adequate space, though it was lacking in the architectural quality appropriate to a fine restaurant. That year, perhaps conveniently, the building was damaged by fire. Well covered by insurance, Davenport was able, with Cutter's help, to rebuild, expanding to 17 private rooms and a banquet room, in addition to the main dining room. In 1900, in time for the Spokane Exposition, the restaurant was enlarged yet again and given the form retained until the 1950s.

The sophisticated dining room was not at first matched by an equally urbane exterior. Before long, however, Cutter clothed the outer walls in white stucco in a manner inspired by the Californian mission revival. The design was based on the three broad arches that fronted the Wilson block on Sprague Avenue, but at the time of refacing two more arches were added. The longer arcade formed in this way distantly echoes the arcade at the Santa Barbara Mission. The little corner tower, modeled on a church bell tower, became a purely decorative feature. In a city of red brick and granite, Davenport's playful evocation of the mission style was startlingly unique.

In November 1903 Davenport acquired both the Wilson block and the Bellevue block to the south, which contained his kitchens. He had already spent thousands of dollars on improvements with no help from the owners. Now he could plan further architectural triumphs entirely for his own benefit. The two upper floors of the three-story Bellevue block were used by Mrs. Maud Pennington as a boarding house, but they were soon to become the Pennington Hotel under Davenport's proprietorship. Cutter continued the "mission" façade in an even

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*Louis Davenport was a quiet, unassuming man who, in 25 years, progressed from selling waffles in a tent to masterminding one of the world's finest hotels.*

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*When downtown Spokane burned to the ground in 1881, Kirtland Cutter, recently arrived from New York and Europe, launched his career as an architect for Spokane's millionaires. His crowning achievement was the Davenport Hotel.*

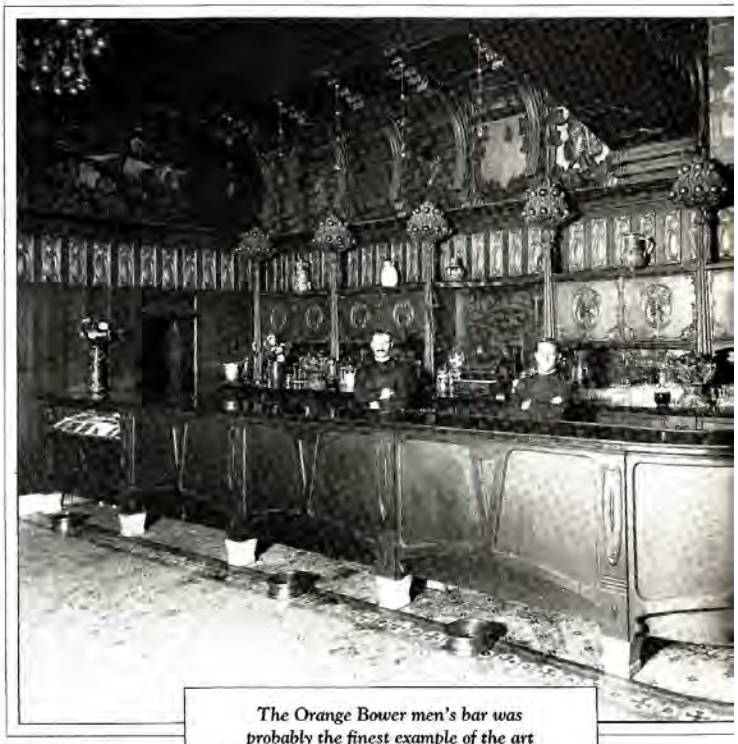
more spirited manner on the higher block. At the junction between the two structures, where floor levels differed, he placed a high curvilinear gable, while beyond it two smaller gables provided a counterpoint. At the corner of Post Street and First Avenue he built a taller tower surmounted by a cupola and skewed 45 degrees to give a cut-off corner to the block. Cutter seems to have deliberately chosen a theatrical exterior effect as a prelude to a dazzling array of original interior spaces.

It is typical of Louis Davenport's imaginative approach to running a business that he proposed to build a greenhouse on the roof of the restaurant to "raise all the flowers and hothouse plants which have been such a feature of the restaurant." Cutter later developed it into a rooftop cafe with palm trees and other exotic foliage.

In 1904 Davenport and Cutter created a new realm of fantasy in a ballroom above the restaurant known as the Hall of the Doges. This ostentatious room was highly eclectic, but its dominant style was Venetian Gothic. The dance floor was surrounded by arcades opening to spacious aisles where guests could sit at tables. On the upper level the gallery windows imitated those of the Ducal Palace in Venice. The entire room was designed for participation. Those sitting in the low-ceilinged aisles were like observers at a theater, watching the drama of the dancers framed by arches; people in the galleries above could look down from vantage points like private boxes at the opera.

Nearby, on the upper floor, the medieval theme was continued in the Gothic Room, a small banquet room whose ceiling simulated a Gothic fan vault. At about the same time, Cutter remodeled several other spaces. Each was distinctive, but they had in common the use of the avant garde art nouveau style. Just off the main restaurant was a small private dining room known as the Peacock Room, whose vaulted ceiling was painted with a bold peacock feather motif. The design implied motion, as of a breeze blowing through feathers; the eye of each feather was in the form of a heart, pointed upwards to the crown of the vault. On the end walls mural paintings took up the peacock theme again. At the entry stood two tall cylindrical aquaria stocked with tropical fish.

Close to the Peacock Room, Cutter designed a men's bar in which elaborate wainscoting, decorative panels and murals enveloped the space with rich surfaces. His tour de force was a back bar fixture ornamented with six tapering shafts that spread out like miniature trees bursting with copious fruit. The ladies' retiring room and Louis Davenport's private suite in the northeast corner were further examples of Art Nouveau. In both, the broad arched windows were playfully ornamented with leaded glass. In Davenport's oak-paneled suite a graceful arch spanned the opening between two rooms. Its sturdy oak supports were lightened with curvilinear patterns. The focus of the room was the fireplace of hammered copper flanked by tree-like forms. Other similar decorative devices enriched the doors. Yet, despite the originality of form, the art nouveau ornament did not seem quirky or excessive. The stylishness was tempered with a quiet dignity.



***The Orange Bower men's bar was probably the finest example of the art nouveau style in the Northwest. It was destroyed in the 1950s.***

The architectural splendor at Davenport's was matched by the lavish service. The menu offered epicurean delights at reasonable prices, and the staff anticipated any need of the traveler, businessman or party-goer. One visitor who was thoroughly impressed was Elbert Hubbard, a leading figure in the American arts and crafts movement and editor of an influential journal named *The Philistine*. In March 1906 he commented enthusiastically on his impressions of

Spokane as "The Model City of America," and singled out the restaurant for praise:

*Davenport's is snug, clean and complete as an ocean liner ready to sail. It contains no ratholes, chuck holes, or unsightly corners. The retiring rooms are dreams in marble and tile. Between the serving room and the kitchen are immense plate glass windows, so the customers can get a look at the kitchen, a place resplendent in copper, nickel and glass, dotted with quick moving men in spotless white . . . .*

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*I am told Davenport is a gentleman, low voiced, quiet, tireless, systematic, imaginative, with a patience and persistence like that of Pericles.*

*The art side of Davenport's restaurant is debtor to Kirt Cutter, a designer and architect, who has keyed Spokane in an artistic way . . . . Residences, stores, clubs, banks, proclaim Kirt Cutter's quiet good taste, and his safe, unbizarre lines and color schemes.*

*Davenport has collaborated with Cutter and the result is Davenport's restaurant, the finest thing of its kind in America . . . . When a man does a thing well beyond compare, though it be but the making of mouse traps, the world will make a pathway to his door, says Emerson. All trails lead to Davenport's.*

As the fame of the fanciful and elaborate establishment spread further afield, it was not surprising that plans developed to build a first class hotel next door. On October 8, 1908, the *Spokesman Review* announced that Spokane was to have a new 550-room, 11-story hotel, built at a cost of $1,750, 000. Although the names of the promoters were still a secret, the article disclosed that Louis Davenport, "whose restaurant has been such a big feature in advertising Spokane," was likely to become its active manager. Cutter and Malmgren, "who have made Spokane famous for its distinctive architecture," were named as the designers. They had already drawn tentative plans. Construction was to begin in the spring.

Certainly, a reading of the proposal's details suggests the extravagant dreams of Cutter and Davenport. They planned an "Old Spanish design . . . highly ornate and complex." At each corner a tower surmounted with a dome was to rise 185 feet above the street, 35 feet higher than the tallest building in the city.

The architects proposed to focus the hotel on an expansive central lobby with a mosaic floor, lit by a "high-arched cone of art glass, shedding floods of multicolored light." Around the lobby were to be spacious mezzanine galleries supported on stone or marble columns. These would connect with the Hall of the Doges, so that banqueting and dancing could be combined. At the lower level patrons could choose between an elaborate new dining room or the already popular Italian Gardens. Cutter also proposed a large assembly room on the top two floors with the acoustics of a church or a theater. All bedrooms were to have outside light and private bathrooms, an unusual and luxurious amenity in 1908. Water from deep wells under the hotel was to be delivered chilled to every guest room for drinking and was also to be used in an ingenious system for cooling the interior spaces. Consistent with Louis Davenport's philosophy, the new hotel was to be "second to none in the country" in terms of "service, elegance and convenience"; yet the intention was "to have rooms at popular prices."

*"Davenport has collaborated with Cutter and the result is Davenport's restaurant, the finest thing of its kind in America . . . ."*

Two days later a large drawing of the flamboyant design was displayed on the front page of the *Spokesman Review* and floor plans were printed inside. The richly ornamented central section of the façade seemed to be based on Spanish Renaissance sources, while massive corner blocks stepping forward on either side belonged more to modern America. But at the skyline all was baroque. Curving mission gables, in sympathy with the restaurant next door, were dwarfed by monumental corner pavilions. And the four higher towers with domes shot up three stories above the rest like the minarets of a great mosque. Such opulence would clearly demand enormous investment.

On October 20 it was announced that the new edifice was to be named the Davenport Hotel.

In late December Kirtland Cutter and Louis Davenport set off on a journey to New York, Chicago and presumably other eastern cities to look at the latest developments in hotel design. A number of splendid hotels had been built recently, and they could not have failed to notice that most of them were compactly built. In such grand hotels as the Ritz Carlton in Philadelphia and the LaSalle in Chicago, no more money than necessary was squandered on exterior ornament. They were generally divided like a column into three parts that might be described as a base, a shaft and a capital. The base, consisting of two or three stories, was generally faced in stone and richly decorated in a classical manner. The object was to catch the attention of potential patrons at street level and give an impression of a sumptu-

Courtesy of Lomas & Nettleton

*The Hall of the Doges was designed by Cutter in 1904 in the Venetian Gothic style to create a realm of fantasy for the citizens of Spokane. Generations of them celebrated there on every possible occasion, until the hotel closed.*

ous life within. Above this, the walls were built less expensively of brick; the shaft consisted of tiers of identical bedroom windows set in a plain wall. Finally, with a flourish, the upper stories burst forth with architectural ornament again. But this was restricted to the surface of the wall and the cornice. Towers, pinnacles and domes were avoided.

Although all obstacles to the acquisition of the site were cleared and Davenport was eager to proceed, it seems that he was having difficulties in winning over investors to his lavish plans. In the spring of 1909 two other architects, J. K. Dow and L. L. Rand, were called in to produce alternative plans and estimates. However, by summer Cutter had clearly routed the opposition. On June 24, 1909, it was announced that construction would begin that year on a far simpler design drawn by Cutter and Malmgren. The towers and other exuberant decorative features were eliminated in favor of interior comforts and the addition of a 12th floor. Emphasis was placed on such practical matters as enlarging the rooms and giving outside light and ventilation to the bathrooms. The number of rooms was reduced to 270, but the top two floors were given over to sample rooms for the many commercial travelers who came to the city. The decision was made to allow for additional rooms in the future without having to add extra stories to the whole block. The sides facing Sprague Avenue and Lincoln Street were to be built to the 12th floor, but the section facing First Avenue was only taken to the third floor. The cost of the project, despite and simplified design, was now estimated at $2.2 million, including site and furnishings.

Although the Davenport Hotel Company was planning to issue bonds both locally and in the east, the project did not, in fact, proceed for another three years. Hopeful again, Davenport announced early in January 1911 that construction would start in the spring, but more than another year elapsed while complex negotiations and further revisions to the design continued. Finally, on July 25, 1912, a banner headline in the *Spokesman Review* proclaimed: "DAVENPORT HOTEL COSTING $2,000,000 TO BE STARTED AT ONCE." Beneath it was an impressive new rendering of the hotel. The years of study and refinement had culminated in a strong, unified composition, very different from the eccentric and over-built proposal of 1908. This was essentially the design whose construction began the following winter.

The design followed the tripartite division typical of modern hotels, and Cutter provided a strong continuity

between the base of Boise sandstone and the ornamental "capital" at the top. Above the massive stone supports that carried arches at street level, red brick piers rose the entire height of the building, emphasizing verticality. Between them the lines of identical bedroom windows on eight floors culminated in tall, arched windows uniting two stories with a decorative flourish of white terra cotta.

The rusticated stone base of the hotel and the design of its upper windows, modeled on those of palaces in 15th-century Florence, gave a key to the new stylistic theme of the hotel. It was described as Florentine, and was intended thus to symbolize the progressive nature of Spokane's civic and business leaders. These men were likened to the wealthy Burghers of Renaissance Florence who, as inheritors of the culture of Greece, Rome and Constantinople, employed art as a symbol of strength. And, following ancient European tradition, the cornice above the second floor was emblazoned with heraldic devices—a closed helmet symbolizing protection; Mercury's staff, with entwined serpents, representing commerce; and, most prominently, a ram's head, standing for "push and determination."

Another perspective rendering demonstrated that the interior had also undergone a successful evolution. The architects had enlarged the atrium and flooded it with light from the sky. This area was surrounded by broad mezzanine galleries supported, like the roof above, on pillars of white Caen stone—the very material of which many French Gothic cathedrals were built. The lobby was conceived as a social focus and a place to accommodate large gatherings and conventions. Here the chosen style was Spanish Renaissance; and again the choice had a symbolic meaning. The patio of the typical Spanish house was considered "wonderfully expressive of the hospitality so characteristic of the Spanish people." In this open court "the only roof . . . was the vine-covered arbor through which could be seen the southern skies." In the Davenport Hotel the aim was to obtain the same effect "by massive transverse beams and the use of a skylight of opalescent glass."

An ingenious, quintessentially American scheme was conceived to heighten the romance of the styles: a silver light was to move slowly in an arc above the skylight, creating the illusion of the moon moving through the sky. To reinforce the Spanish influence and convey Davenport's ideals for the hotel, an elaborate system of iconography was developed.

Portrait medallions carved on the beams spanning the huge space evoked the Spanish tradition of honoring ancestors. They were interspersed with national coats of arms; griffins, "symbolic of strength . . . alertness, swiftness and rapidity of execution"; and dolphins, "always associated in mythology with sociability." The helmet, carved in stone on the exterior, was repeated inside to offer "protection."

A monumental fireplace gave the lobby a home-like feeling, and a white Italian marble fountain, complete with a cherub and a dolphin spouting water, offered refreshment. Finally, an entire pipe organ provided music at the east end.

Light fixtures were specially designed to add to the opulence of the space. Elaborate bronze lanterns, wall sconces like candelabra, and four huge bronze columns spiralling and entwined with vine leaves produced a soft exotic light. The furnishing colors were generally subtle and subdued.

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*The first design for the Davenport Hotel in 1908. Cutter's flamboyant skyline was greatly simplified by the time the hotel was completed in 1914.*

Surrounding the lobby were ten shops opening to the street and a number of public rooms to suit different moods and occasions. Davenport's Restaurant, after some remodeling, became the grill room of the hotel, while a new and grander place to dine, known as the Isabella Room, was built off the south side of the lobby next to the enlarged kitchens. Its name was chosen in honor of Queen Isabella of Spain, whose "imagination, confidence and unselfishness" had helped Columbus on his voyage of discovery. Accordingly, its decor was conceived in a Spanish Renaissance style.

Off the west end of the lobby and opening onto Lincoln Street was a room of entirely different character. The Chinese Buffet was intended as "distinctly a man's room," breathing "the spirit of masculinity." But what was offered to the gentlemen of Spokane who wanted to drink in male company was not, as might be expected, something rugged like a typical Western saloon; it was delicate and sophisticated. The light entering the large windows was softened as it passed through screens of latticework and paper.

At mezzanine level yet another national stylistic reference appeared in the Marie Antoinette Ballroom, with its fully sprung dance floor surrounded by upper galleries.

*"I consider, first Utility; second, Life; third, Beauty. I place utility first, for the reason that service is the keynote of successful hotel keeping."*

Marie Antoinette was credited with restoring classic ideals in French design after the vulgar ornateness of the previous era. The architects therefore aimed for dignified simplicity and chaste elegance. Decorative moldings on walls, galleries and ceiling beams were enhanced with a color scheme of ivory and French gray. To give a festive touch, plaster medallions of court jesters ornamented the gallery. Three superb crystal chandeliers completed the scene. From the gallery level French windows opened onto a formally planted roof garden with a promenade between shrubs and flowers. Ornate lights were designed to create the effect of a fairyland.

The Elizabethan Room, a smaller banquet room on the north side, divisible into three by folding partitions, added yet another national theme to the collection. Here the dark oak paneling, adorned with heraldic crests, proclaimed that the style was Old English. Ornamental plaster work on the ceiling emulated late Tudor designs, and the furniture, all in oak, was "conscientiously copied after the most famous Elizabethan pieces in existence." Even the solid silver chandeliers were a reminder of the wealth of English country houses.

Naturally, the cloakroom, the ladies' retiring rooms and the beauty salon that opened off the mezzanine were all finished to the luxurious standards of the rest. And, for the men, a well-appointed barber's shop was provided in the basement. This space, offering a variety of services, was named the Pompeiian Room. With its finish of white marble and Pompeiian red, reflected in many mirrors, the effect was opulent indeed. The traveler who arrived tired after a long automobile journey was to be offered special attention there. "He may enter the basement all dusty with hands covered with grease and in half an hour be turned out by the barber, manicurist and valet a spick-and-span new man, with pressed clothes . . . ." The male preserve of the basement also included a Turkish bath and a billiard room with 12 tables.

While the public rooms offered the patron an escape from 20th-century America into a dream world, the bedrooms were intended to be home-like. The aim was "an utter absence of gaudy trappings," arguing that the weary traveler was not very particular whether the bed in which he would "perchance . . . dream of home and little ones, was made after the style of Elizabeth or of Louis XIV." The provision of fine mattresses and a restful environment with clean, fresh air were considered more important. The mahogany furniture was generally on simple lines.

There were 406 guest rooms, 370 of which had private baths. In the final design, the bathrooms were not placed on the exterior wall, as proposed earlier, but they were separately ventilated. There were, of course, opulent suites, including the state suite designed for such important guests as presidents of the United States, accompanied by their entire cabinet if necessary, and for senators, governors, movie stars and tycoons. But room prices started at $1.50. There was perhaps an inducement here for the impecunious traveler, rejoicing in the good value of the accommodation, to be a little extravagant in the dining room.

Louis Davenport stated his own priorities in hotel management, perhaps reversing those of his partner Kirtland Cutter: "I consider, first Utility; second, Life; third, Beauty. I place utility first, for the reason that service is the keynote of successful hotel keeping."

Although utility and service were primary, "life," which meant the safety and durability of the structure and all the systems within it, was a close second. The steel frame, encased in concrete, and the hollow tile walls were designed to ensure stability and eliminate the danger of fire spreading through the hotel. As an extra precaution, fireproof doors and sprinklers were installed in the basement. The materials used throughout the building were of the highest quality and unseen by the guests were elaborate means of producing whatever they might need as if by magic. The artesian well, 662 feet deep, produced 400 gallons of water per minute; 20 miles of pipe distributed it to wherever it was required; iced water, available on tap in every room, was distilled and kept continually circulating, insulated by a layer of cork; elevators with silent doors were installed to run smoothly up and down the building; 20 clocks were synchronized by a master to keep perfect time in all parts of the building; a complex lock system allowed staff to know whether rooms were occupied; in the basement a marble switchboard 26 feet long and 10 feet high controlled the electrical system. And the Davenport was one of the first hotels to be fully air conditioned. To keep the hotel clean, a highly efficient central vacuum system was installed and maids used mobile carts that even included a desk to keep notes. The 40-ton refrig-

Courtesy of Lomas & Nettleton

*The lobby of the Davenport Hotel thronged with revelers at an unidentified event in 1917. The hotel was at the center of the city's social life and attracted conventions that otherwise would not have come to Spokane.*

eration plant was put in not only to provide ice; it chilled food in the store rooms, cooled counter tops on which the chefs worked, and even froze the garbage before it left the hotel. It goes without saying that the kitchen equipment was of the latest and most efficient design available; the kitchens were planned so that 4,000 meals a day could be served. In short, the Davenport Hotel and restaurant contained both a dazzling collection of spaces intended to evoke a magical world of fantasy and the latest in American inventiveness and technology.

The citizens of Spokane watched with excitement as the Davenport Hotel neared completion. Popular expectations were constantly raised by press reports of progress under such headlines as "DAVENPORT'S IS WONDERLAND." In the early evening of September 1, the hotel was "besieged by an admiring crowd." When the moment came for the doors to open, hundreds flooded in. Despite the press of people, "the service that evening was conducted as smoothly as if the hotel had been open for months."

During the next 50 years the Davenport was the center of Spokane's social and business life. It was the gathering place for civic groups, business people, and pleasure seekers. It was the venue for celebrations of all kinds, from graduation dances to weddings. Important visitors were feted in the banquet rooms and huge conventions were attracted that would not otherwise have come to Spokane. One patron described it as "a wonderful palace, where rich and poor, old friends and strangers alike can find not a mere shelter, but instantaneous home." Almost everyone who lived in the city during that time had memories and stories to tell about the great hotel; so there was real sadness at its deterioration and closing. Now, with restoration in the offing, expectations are rising again. Many Friends of the Davenport (an organization formed in 1986 to work for the hotel's rehabilitation) are looking forward to the day when the doors reopen and they see the hospitable atrium flooded with light through its glass roof. But this will only happen if there is true commitment in the Spokane community.

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